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Tourist attraction towards hill station in India-- Historical reasons and sustainability perspectives



*** Dr Lavkush Mishra ** Suresh Chandra Juyal**

*** Dir, Institute of Tourism & Hotel Mang, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar University, Khandari Campus, Agra
** Research Scholar at Singhania University, Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan**

A B S T R A C T

Indian hill stations are a traveler's paradise, gifted with snowy peaks, deep gorges, lush green valleys, vibrant flora and fauna. These hill stations are popular with both Indian and foreign tourists and offer a relaxing and wholesome break from the hustle and bustle of urban life. Hill tourism has been one of the most significant forms of leisure Tourism in practice historically. Visitors throng hill stations in particular season since they get a respite from the dust and pollution of the big cities but also, the cool, calm and serene environment of the hills gives them respite from the hot and humid conditions in the plains

Key Words:- Flora and fauna, throng, respite, cool and calm environment

Introduction:

It is important to understand why Tourists are attracted to hill stations. The reasons are linked to Tourism as an activity and how it can be sustained in the long run. If the Tourism activities are allowed to exert undue pressures on the ecology and socio-cultural environment of the Hill stations, the hill tourism and its existence might itself be in danger, moreover, the revenue generated from the same as well as the precious flora and fauna might be lost.

Reasons for attraction

Tourists throng the Hill regions for many reasons. Apart from the desire for a feeling of renewal and spiritual well being, the other major reason for popularity of Hill Tourism is the sprawling population and increasing pollution in the Lowlands or plains. The overcrowded urban areas and the stress associated with the pollution, noise, and crime make the people in these areas to seek peace, calm and beauty relatively. This phenomenon is particularly applicable for domestic tourism in most mountain regions around the world. One of the best examples of this phenomenon is Hill stations in the Indian Himalaya, developed by British in the past and now flocked by the Indian Middle class to escape the summer.

Sustainability

There is an increasing concern with sustainable development in recent years. The socio economic as well as the socio cultural aspects of development of tourist destination regions have become a topic of serious discussion in the Himalayan region. Hill Tourism is being perceived more as a development issue from the inhabitants' perspective. Thus, as with any kind of development, the issue of the sustainability of the environment and the sustainability of the pace of the said development activity comes to the fore front. (Sharma, 2000).

The Tourism policy of a country should be able to furnish a clear statement of the Governments attitude and plans of action towards the issues of sustainable Tourism and the roles of all those concerned in the Tourism sector and its execution. As a principle it should be understood that Tourism without addressing the sustainability concerns of the particular destination cannot be effectively practiced in the long run.

Suggestions:

It seems imperative thus, based on above deliberations that the reasons for attractions have to be preserved. In order to preserve the Hill attractions, we need to find ways and means to mitigate the negative effects of the excessive tourism activities. Researchers have suggested that Tourism in Hill regions can be organized as an industry, with due care to avoid exploitative use of scarce local resources, water and fuel wood the preservation of which is crucial to the sustainability of relative standard of life and consequently the Tourism itself in the respective regions. It has been observed that in spite of the fact that the human pressures that the Himalayas have experienced are a result of the exploitation of the natural resources of the region, the number of visitors is on the rise. Sometimes the Mountaineers and trekkers unknowingly exert pressures on the flora and fauna of the Himalayan region. They not only destroy the flora but leave trash behind that is non biodegradable and is hazardous to the natural environment of the region. In this regard it has been advised that whereas the waste that is biodegradable should be buried in pits, the waste that cannot be recycled and is non biodegradable should be carried back to plains for proper recycling or disposal. Given the current state of the Himalayan hill stations, the scholars have termed them as 'concrete slums.' The fact emerges that there is acute shortage of basic resources like water in certain Hill

stations, owing in large part to the Tourist activity in the area. The situation is becoming increasingly irreversible. One of the plausible ways to address this problem is to make the local population aware of their rights and needs and the demands Tourism puts on their resources (Kohli, 2004). In spite of assurances as to the role of tourism in economic development of the region, scholars have concluded that tourism in rural areas can not automatically solve the problem of underdevelopment, if the economic well being of the area is neglected. Tourism can not be a driving force of economic development of the Hill stations, rather it can be a supplement to an already strong economy of the overall region in which it falls. Sometimes, due to fast paced real estate development owing to growth of tourism, forces proud owners of small pieces of land or small businesses to work in low positions in the hotels or tourism industry.(Earth Summit, 2002). Tourism as a system thrives on the natural environment as one of the most important resources. The phenomenon of urbanization results in both industrialized as well as developing countries with primarily natural features, scenery, cultural heritage and natural attractions, being the driving factors of growth of tourism in a given region. (Jacob, 2008).

Objectives of Study: The study was conducted with the following objectives:

- 1.To understand and appreciate the historical and current reasons for Tourist attraction to Indian Hill stations.
- 2.To understand the sustainability aspects of Hill tourism in India.
- 3.To investigate the importance of natural environment as a basic ingredient of hill Tourism in a given region as compared to other forms of Tourism.

Methodology of Study: The study is based on secondary research and relies on an objective and exhaustive review of relevant literature on the topic with the above objectives in mind. This is an exploratory study and aims to investigate and ascertain the Historical and sustainability perspectives of Hill Tourism in India.

Findings:

1. The Hill stations were originally developed as spa resorts by the British, but they quickly evolved into refuges for escaping the summer heat.
2. Tourists throng hill stations in particular season since they get a respite from the dust and pollution of the big cities.
3. Factors like pleasing weather, scenic attractions, His-

torical and/or cultural factors, accessibility or reach, forms of accommodation available, determine the tourist traffic to a particular destination. The hill stations seem to possess at least two of these in plenty in the form of pleasing weather and scenic beauty, while the others can be developed in a desirable form.

4. It was during the Mughal and then British times that the Tourism as we see it in a modern sense started. A number of resorts were put up on the hills. These resorts attracted a large number of people to their fold.

5. The Hill stations in India have been identified as vital part of the early forms of urbanization in India.
6. The Hill stations are evolving and adding more and more attractions in the form of sports and cultural activities, which offer more and more potential for tourism at these places.
7. Tourism in Hill regions can be organized as an industry, with due care to avoid exploitative use of scarce local resources.
8. Hill Tourism is being perceived more as a development issue from the inhabitants' perspective.
9. Tourism without addressing the sustainability concerns of the particular hill destination can not be effectively practiced in the long run.

Conclusion: Hill Tourism, being one of the major revenue earners for any region or country as compared to other forms of Tourism. Hill Tourism though not itself being the revenue earner in many cases, still acts as an attraction in conjunction with many other forms of Tourism and is a major causal factor for Tourism growth and sustenance. The major reason for people being attracted to Hill stations is the calm, cool and serene environments and scenic beauty they offer. The natural environment and the Biodiversity offered by hill stations is one of the basic ingredients of tourism and have historically been behind the development of Tourism and related activities. In India, quite notably Hill Tourism developed in Mughal and British Times, wherein the hill destinations served as resorts for the royals. These resorts later evolved into present day Hill Stations. The natural environment being the mainstay of Hill Tourism and a supporting and causal factor of many other forms of Tourism. Thus, the preservation of natural environment and ecosystem of these hill destinations becomes of paramount importance. The study concludes that the preservation of Natural environment of the Hill Destinations is not possible without taking the concerns of the perspectives of the inhabitants.

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